Exploring the research process through the innovation journey of tourism entrepreneurs case study

I INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH
18th April, Alicante

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Institute of Tourism Research
University of Alicante, Spain
1 The research process
1 My research choice

Tourism innovation is a novel area of research

Published items in the latest 20 years

Citations/year in the latest 20 years

Topic of the search: tourism innovation

Source: Web of science
1. My research choice

National systems of tourism innovation.
Government and tourism innovation policy

Networks clusters and regions

Local systems of innovation (destinations)

Tourism firms innovation

Main areas of research so far...

...but still fragmented studies and many gaps and challenges...
1 My research choice

THE CHALLENGE: UNDERSTANDING INNOVATION EMERGENCE

OPENING THE BLACK BOX OF THE INNOVATION PROCESS

MY RESEARCH CHOICE

Work with innovative entrepreneurs to explore their innovation journey

Innovative entrepreneurs

Opportunity discovery

Opportunity evaluation

Sources of power acquisition

Innovation production

Organisational emergence

Commercialisation and innovation adoption
2 How I designed my research

Population of innovators

A controlled sample of firms participating in a public programme (Emprendetur in Spain) which grants loans to young entrepreneurs (under 40) with innovative projects in tourism.

Number of proposals funded and denied by Emprendetur Young Entrepreneurs, 2012-2014

- 2012: 67 proposals
- 2013: 71 proposals
- 2014: 16 proposals

Research sample

- 2012: 9 proposals denied, 9 proposals granted
- 2013: 14 proposals denied, 14 proposals granted
- 2014: 29 proposals denied, 29 proposals granted
2 How I designed my research

2-stage methodology

1) Desk research about the firms and their founders: types of innovations, founders identity, position and background: web site analysis and LinkedIn public information to determine prior knowledge and experience brought into the process.
### 2 How I designed my research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSONALITY, SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership, proactivity, emotional intelligence, multicultural mind, creativity and innovation, negotiation skills, flexibility and results orientation. Passionate about travel and people development.</td>
<td>2002-2003 International Master in Tourism and leisure - ESADE Business School</td>
<td>Tourism/ E-commerce/ Leisure/ Management/ Revenue Analysis/ Hotels/ Online Marketing/ Marketing Strategy/ Hospitality/ Tour Operators/ Online Advertising/ Business Strategy/ SEM/ Pricing/ Online Travel/ Web 2.0/ Google Analytics/ Digital Marketing/ PPC/ Internet Entrepreneur/ Google Adwords/ SEO/ Airlines/ Email Marketing/ Affiliate</td>
<td>May 2013-present Founder and CEO (Exoticca)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder and CEO at Exoticca</td>
<td>1998-2001 Diploma in Business and Tourism Activities - ESERP Barcelona</td>
<td></td>
<td>2011-2013 Tour Operation Responsible (Privalia Travel*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1995 Diploma in Special Teaching - Leon University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011-2011 Tour Operation Manager (Voyage Prive**)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The entrepreneurial personality

The influence of **learning.**

Entrepreneurial attributes acquired by education

Complementary skills and knowledge of the entrepreneurial team
2 How I designed my research

2) Qualitative approach: **semi-structured interviews** so the innovators can narrate their **journey from idea generation to innovation diffusion**: idea emergence, motivation to invest in tourism, critical moments and obstacles, networking, etc.
3 Data collection

- Between July and September 2014, 24 entrepreneurs interviewed through Skype
- Transcription of audio recordings

4 Analysis and interpretation

- Discourse analysis: data reduction through code application, categorizing, recurrent themes, relevant quotes, etc.
- Analysis of the innovators background
4 Analysis and interpretation

As a surprising discovery...“New-to-tourism” entrepreneurs

Fig 1. Entrepreneurs’ Educational Background

- Higher Education/Undergraduate Studies
  - Engineering: 25
  - Business: 2
  - Marketing: 2
  - Tourism: 1
- Further Education
  - Professional Education: 1
  - General Secondary Education: 1

Source: Own elaboration based on LinkedIn profiles. A total sample of 32 founders and co-founders.
4 Analysis and interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER AND TYPES OF INNOVATIONS</th>
<th>SHORT DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Technological tools/Apps</td>
<td>- Marketing services for restaurants (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Marketing positioning tool to increase hotel visibility (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Marketing contents creation through Big Data (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Services for ski resorts users through mobile App (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hotels revenue management tool (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hotel-customer interaction (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Technological platforms offering innovative forms of ...</td>
<td>- Learning and training in tourism (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Travelling (1 social network and 2 online travel agencies)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Negotiating customer-hotel prices (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtaining tourists geopositioning and big data information (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sustainable mobility</td>
<td>- Patented system of low cost parking in hotels (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Electric vehicles car rental services in tourism destinations (1)</td>
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</table>
4 Analysis and interpretation

As a surprising discovery...“New-to-tourism” entrepreneurs. Possible interpretation:

- In tourism brought-in technology is an important driver of innovation.

- In Spain, tourism programmes do not formally encourage innovative entrepreneurship (either undergraduate and postgraduate studies) through specific subjects. They tend to prepare students to work for the industry.

- Innovative capacity of the tourism sector to generate in-house innovation?

Source: Own elaboration based on LinkedIn profiles. A total sample of 32 founders and co-founders.
What led these individuals to create innovative ventures in tourism?

- Tourism a relevant, strong and strategic economic sector with less risk and uncertainty.
- Tourism a technology-laggard sector and niche-subsectors (e.g. restaurants, ski resorts)
## 4 Analysis and interpretation

### Interpretation of the process and key observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task: Idea generation</th>
<th>Innovative entrepreneurs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Opportunity discovery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Opportunity evaluation</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task: Coalition building</th>
<th>Sources of power acquisition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Information (data, knowledge and expertise), resources (funds, time, space) or support (backing, approval).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Task: Idea realisation</th>
<th>Innovation production</th>
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<td></td>
<td>- Prototype development and pilot testing with customers.</td>
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<td>- Innovation adaptation. Trial and error learning. <strong>Obstacles</strong>, replanning and redirection.</td>
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<td>- Working team assembling; founders division of labor and outside knowledge resources.</td>
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<td>- Capital mobilisation.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Task: Transfer or diffusion</th>
<th>Commercialisation and innovation adoption</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Customer-related obstacles</td>
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<td>- Diffusion facilitators: structural connections between potential innovators and users (e.g. user involvement in development) and active diffusion agents.</td>
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5 Pre-publication and publication

Diffusion of findings at:

- 23rd Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality Research, Copenhagen Denmark 1-4 October 2014
- International Tourism Hospitality and Events Conference organised by the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Surrey, 19-22 July.

Working on a paper near to submission to a high impact journal (Annals of Tourism Research).
What’s next, new challenges

Friday 05 Feb 2016, from School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

The innovation journey of tourism entrepreneurs

Professor Allan Williams and Dr Vlatka Skokic of the University of Surrey and Dr Isabel Rodriguez of the University of Alicante awarded EU Marie Curie Research Fellowship.

Professor Allan Williams and Dr Vlatka Skokic of the University of Surrey and Dr Isabel Rodriguez of the University of Alicante have been awarded an EU Marie Curie Research Fellowship to conduct a two-year study that will contribute to bridging the gap between research on innovation and entrepreneurship in tourism, and tourism innovation policies. The main aim is to deepen understanding of the different stages of the innovation journey followed by entrepreneurs in tourism. It will examine not only the classic start-up process, such as opportunity recognition, development and early implementation of innovation in the market, but also the subsequent stages of business performance (discontinuance, growth, further innovation, etc.).

The proposed study has three main objectives:
- **Follow-up** study (innovation failure or success).
- **Different types of innovators** and **innovations**. Influence of different institutional and tourism settings (Comparisons between UK and Spain).
- Extract policy recommendations and implications.
Virtuous cycle

Funding

Successful research choices (novel, original opportunities)

Innovative research (risk-taking vs conservative behaviour)

New research competencies

Publications in 4 stars journals
Thank you very much for your attention!

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